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*Putnam, John. 1871*

# MR. PUTNAM'S ORATION

BEFORE THE

PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY.



## ORATION

DELIVERED AT CAMBRIDGE,

BEFORE

THE PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY

IN

HARVARD UNIVERSITY,

AUGUST 29, 1844.

By GEORGE PUTNAM.

BOSTON:

CHARLES C. LITTLE AND JAMES BROWN.

1844.



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## ORATION.

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MR. PRESIDENT, AND GENTLEMEN :

WE meet here to-day as scholars, at least to remind ourselves that we once studied, and began to be scholars. With many of us, indeed, our scholarship is little more than a subject of remembrance. The cares of the world have engrossed us, and the prizes of life have taken us captive. The vows which we vowed to Minerva in our youth, we have redeemed in our age at the shrine of far other gods, whose names are unknown in the Olympian calendar. However this may be, we have still an interest in the cause of good letters. It is to be presumed that the liberal studies and literary associations of our early days have somewhat shaped our ends in life, and shed an abiding influence over the most unclassic of our pursuits. We are debtors for life to the intellectual training which we received here. To-day we come to acknowledge it. For the day, at least, we drop all other interests, and are scholars again. It is fit, then, that we consider together of matters pertaining to sound learning and intellectual culture, its relations and its conditions. And in that

part of the exercises of the occasion which has fallen to me, I could not answer it to myself should I do less than present what I regard as the highest of those relations and the most vital of those conditions; and these are of a moral nature. My subject, therefore, is *The Connection between Intellectual and Moral Culture*; between Scholarship and Character, Literature and Life.

Pardon the professional bias, if it be one, which leads to this choice. I know I am not placed here to moralize, nor do I intend to preach. Here and now let intellectual interests stand foremost in our regards. We will take counsel for these. Let intellect be recognized as king in man. Let virtue step down from the throne, and put off the crown with which God has invested her, and take the place of handmaid to her vassal. Sovereign as she is, she is the willing servant of all in her realm, and delighteth to minister.

My position is, that there are moral conditions on which the best and healthiest intellectual culture depends; that the intellect needs nourishment and guidance from those ideas and affections, which have conscience for their centre, and duty and virtue for their object, and recognized spiritual relations for a deep, substantial basis; that the moral elements of character are necessary to the truest, most desirable success in study and literature.

This position I would illustrate and maintain — not now for righteousness' sake, but for the sake of the intellect.

And to state at once the highest point of connection between moral and intellectual attainment — the love of Truth. Truth is the one legitimate object of all intellectual endeavor. To discover and apprehend truth, to clear up and adorn it, to establish, and present and commend it, — these are the processes and the ends of study and literature. To discern the things that really are and how they are, to distinguish reality from appearance and sham, to know and declare the true in outward nature, in past time, in the results of speculation, in consciousness and sentiment, — this is the business of educated mind. Logic and the mathematics are instruments for this purpose, and so is the imagination just as strictly. A poem, a play, a novel, though a work of fiction, must be true or it is a failure. Its machinery may be unknown to the actual world ; the scene may be laid in Elysian fields, or infernal shades, or fairy land ; but the law of truth must preside over the work ; it must be the vehicle of truth, or it is nought and is disallowed. The *Tempest*, the *Odyssey*, and *Paradise Lost*, derive their value from their truth ; and I say this not upon utilitarian principles, but according to the verdict which every true soul passes upon them, consciously or unconsciously. Lofty, holy truth, made beautiful and dear and winning to the responsive heart, — this is their charm, their wealth, their immortality. There is no permanent intellectual success but in truth attained and brought home to the eye, the understanding, or the heart.

And for the best success in the pursuit of any ob-

man can afford to be ignorant of what such a man has said and done, and no French library could venture to call itself a library, without its department for Voltaire. Still he is not read as living and ruling minds are read. His histories are not referred to as authorities, but have become notorious rather for their perversion, careless or fraudulent, of dates and facts. His name, we are assured, is hissed, when quoted by the Historical Professor in the lecture-rooms of Paris. His poetry, with all its artistic perfection, is no fountain of inspiration or spiritual refreshment to anybody; and the highest French critics, with all their national feeling, have ceased to glory in the *Henriade*. His dramas, which are his best things, will probably be retained on the stage for some time longer, on account of the felicity of their literary execution and dramatic adaptation. His batteries against religion, that bristled once so fierce and formidable, are dismantled, and that beyond repair. His philosophical speculations have scarcely a place of refuge left them, except in a few crumbling chateaux of the French provinces, where some octogenarian survivors of a graceless era still mutter in the ears of an unheeding world the last things they learned — the denials of infidelity and the dogmas of jacobinism.

Why is all this so? Why has it turned out thus with that great man, so brilliant in wit, of gifts so varied, an intellectual activity and productiveness so immense, and an influence so wide and triumphant? Considering the position he once held, and the power

he once exercised, it is not too much to say, that Voltaire has come to nought. And why? His deficiencies were, no doubt, many and radical. But one just reason, and a comprehensive one, is, that the law of Truth was not in him. It is not merely because there was error in many of his opinions; this must happen to all—to common men and great men. Errors of opinion will not sink a man, but indifference to truth will sink any man. It is not that he hated truth, or desired wickedly to propagate falsehood; but he did not love and worship truth. He felt not the overawing divinity there is in it. He did not distinguish between it and the plausible and politic. He had no faith of the heart in anything.

If he had had but a loving faith, only some touch of a believing spirit, he had been saved; faith in anything—in God, or man, or nature; in things temporal, or things eternal; in a problem of mathematics or a Huttonian theory of the earth; in some conclusion of logic, or some deep aspiration of the soul; in some religion, whether of the Bible, the Koran, the Shaster, or of the heart; in some priesthood, whether of Papal appointment, or an inner, unrecognized and spiritual anointing from above; in some nobleness, whether by kingly endowment, or a God-given patent stamped on the brow of greatness; in some beauty, whether of heroic virtue or only a garden-flower; only a faith, taking any direction, but clinging to *something* as true, and therefore dear and sacred;—then there had been something for him to love and labor for—to live and die for—

for its own worth to him; then he had been a true and earnest man, and his whole intellectual destiny changed. But this loadstar of the soul was wanting. He never felt its heavenward attraction. The divine principle was not in him, and so he was given over to the sway of his vanity and lightness, his spite and spleen, and all the pack of infirmities which his temperament and position engendered. He sinks into the seat of the scoffer. His genius goes out in mocking and contempt. His greatness is in denial. His power is in pulling down. Such a man, by the very turn of his mind, must be shallow, never profound. He seeks not the true in thought, but the striking, the available, the effective. The first mind of his age, and producing vast immediate effect, revolutionizing the ways of thinking for a whole generation or two, he has yet added nothing to the world's stock of knowledge, nor originated a single idea that bears fruit, nor an influence whereby souls grow larger and richer by partaking. He is henceforth no man's spiritual benefactor. The young mind that should now choose him as its nursing father and highest man, would be stunted to barrenness and belittled to insignificance. For a *great* man, the first intellectual man of his age, this result I call failure.

I have not spoken thus of the leading mind of the last century, by way of blaming Voltaire, because he was not more truly great, or great in a different and better way, nor because I desire the credit of that very equivocal sort of courage which dares to insult a dead lion, but because he furnishes the most conspicuous example

of a sort of intellectual character very prevalent at that period, and always extant in some degree ; a character which so signally vitiated the culture and dimmed the fame of many leading minds of that period, and does so still in individual cases — an intellectual character, that is, divorced from that great moral element, the love of truth ; — for I think it is to be called a moral element. However it may be metaphysically classed as to its origin, it undoubtedly derives its best nutriment and power, and its upward direction from the moral sentiments and the spiritual affinities that underlie them. The modern term “intellectual conscience” is of equivocal import and might be dispensed with. If it have any true meaning, it must simply mean the moral sense and judgment as directed to intellectual doings. It is the same principle in its essence as that which begets veracious speech in common intercourse — makes a man true and trusty, faithful and righteous in the dealings of practical life. It is at bottom that which nerves men for heroic deeds of self-denial, wherein ease and wealth, safety and worldly honor, and whatever the common heart holds dearest, are cast behind and trodden under foot, a willing sacrifice for truth and the right, for kin, for country and mankind, for God and religion. It is the same divine flame that guides the honest man on the even tenor of his noiseless way, burns in the breast of the patriot, and outburns the fires that seal the martyr’s triumph. All truth is in some sense religious, and a hearty love and desire of any truth elevates the mind. All truth has an upward tendency.



Begin where it may — it begins anywhere and everywhere — begin where it may, it rises from its low places, circles round the heart of man, soars into the region of spiritualities, pierces to the highest heavens, and culminates at last in God. A love and reverence for truth, in literature as in life, is a moral sentiment demanding a moral culture, and as such it is a prime condition of the best intellectual success, which it legitimates and ennobles.

But further than this, not only is a love of truth as a moral law, a divine law, requisite to preside over all intellectual activity ; but in some departments of literature, moral culture is necessary, because the moral nature is itself the fountain from which the intellect derives its best materials. In poetry, in the higher spiritual philosophy, and in general the various literature that addresses the sentiments and pertains to human life and experience, this is especially the case.

It has been often remarked, that the few poems which stand out as *the* greatest, have been of a religious character, have embodied the author's conception of divine and eternal things, have proceeded, that is, from a conjunction of the highest mind with the highest themes. Homer, Dante, Milton, are the names by which the remark is verified. It is, however, too much to say that genius must always choose religious subjects, or propose to itself a distinct moral or religious aim ; but it is not too much to say, that genius, whatever direction it may take, must ever draw its richest resources, its most living thoughts, from religious faith and the feelings that lie alongside

of the conscience. Those high imaginations, that thrill all souls, and bend them to the master's hand, have their birth in the holy places of the heart. It will be found true of the *greatest* poets as of the greatest artists, whatever the errors of their lives, that they have been men of an intense faith, a faith in something that has been to them a religion, capable of an engrossing apprehension of the divine being and glory, of spiritual longings that would take the kingdom of heaven as by violence, and of hallowed sympathies that make the virtues of the pure heart the surest realities, the most winning beauty, and the incomparable blessedness of earth. It is these conceptions and capabilities that have made them great and given them the mastery. There is always a spiritual halo investing great thoughts. There is ever a moral beauty underlying all true beauty. Whatever has deeply moved us, has, unconsciously perhaps, but really, stirred the fountain of the moral emotions. Genius is not mere sensibility, but it is ever debtor to the heart, and without riches there it is a beggar and a starveling. Great thoughts, like great purposes, spring generally out of the emotions. The heart sees quicker, farther, higher than the head. Imagination is no substitute for feeling; it can but reproduce, diversify and combine what is or has been an inner experience. He who would move me, must himself be moved, or must have been moved, with the same emotions. The poet must feel; and to be a great poet, a permanently successful one, he must feel the reality and force of those truths, which the heart of

the world bears witness to as the most profound and the most elevating, and these are of a spiritual lineage and a moral nature. He must feel these intensely. Write about what he will, these must glow along his track and permeate his work. He may say nothing about them; he may hide them, perhaps he had better; he may be scarcely conscious of them—but they must be there, a living soul, a heavenly baptism, a benignant spell, which criticism may not define, but which the souls of mankind by their own mystic chemistry will detect and respond to. Name your great poets, whether in prose or verse, and whatever else may be in their works, things to excite pleasure or disgust, admiration or contempt, or both, yet if the world has accepted and sealed them as *great*, and taken them to its heart, you shall find thoughts that make you a better and a higher being; thoughts that lift you to your God, or knit you to your brother; that abate your baser tendencies, and brings out your nobler; that soothe you to placid repose, or spur you to a braver struggle and hardy endeavors—influences that purify your affections and stir your energies, that quicken your perception of the good and fair, and make Duty a more venerable and lovely thing. Works that are merely brilliant, or merely amusing, evincing only dexterity and smartness in the author, appealing only to the sensual, the superficial and the transient in human experience, such works have their day of popularity, but the flood of time passes over them and they are not.

Profound moral experiences are accordingly requi-

site for the best success in literature. To extend and deepen, to refine and exalt these, is a part of the culture of genius for genius' sake — a part which it is fatal to omit. It seems to be the privilege of genius, perhaps the thing that makes it genius, to be naturally endowed with high spiritual conceptions and an unusual share of the moral affinities, affections and aspirations. When the true poet is born, the soul of goodness is born in him. But as if Providence would equalize its favors, it seems to have rendered it peculiarly difficult for him to maintain his birthright, and keep it from contamination and decay. There is but one embodiment in which the soul of goodness in man can live and grow, and that is, a character, practical life, the deeds and traits that conform to the generous inspirations. It is its law that it shall be so embodied, or else die out of the heart. The man of genius is prone to forget or defy this law. Actual character and the daily household virtues are for common men, he thinks. It is *his* glory to shape his visions of the divine into the "thoughts that breathe and the words that burn." *He* may win others to the beautiful, the noble and the true, and "reck not his own read." The homely virtues, without which the world must go asunder, *he*, from his mount of vision, may set aside as the cramped conventionalities which the free spirit spurns and is released from. *He* may follow impulses for laws, the basest as well as the holiest, and make, unblamed,

— "such wanton, wild, and usual slips  
As are companions, noted and most known  
To youth and liberty."

But it will not do. He braves a law that is higher and stronger than he, and he must take the retribution. "Take the talent from him," is the edict gone forth from the foundation of the world. His soul must dwindle, his inspiration fade away, his perceptions of the first fair, first good, grow strained and dim.

"Great thoughts, great feelings, that came to him  
Like instincts, unawares,"

come dwarfed and fewer. The light goes gradually out within him. Earth-born passions displace the angel-guards that would have kept him, and base alloy overlays the gold and jewels with which his Maker endowed and adorned him at his birth. He may *play* the poet, but he has outraged his poet nature, and his wand is broken. Sincerity is gone, and with it the true fire of his genius and his hold on the heart of the world.

I know there are apparent exceptions, but I believe they are apparent only. A most remarkable, an almost miraculous one, presents itself in the case of that great man who has so long held the sceptre which fell from the withered hand of Voltaire, the German Goethe. If we may venture to dissent from the idolatrous panegyrics of some of his European and American admirers, and may abide by the more detailed accounts and calmer judgments that reach us from the great man's own country, and which we are assured prevail there — with some contradiction indeed, but a contradiction growing fainter every day, — then we may look upon Goethe as the impersonation of

moral indifference. A gentleman and a courtier, he made his elegant Epicureanism conform to the decencies and graces of the polished and even elevated society in which he moved, or which, perhaps we ought to say, moved round him as its centre. He knew how to win the regard, perhaps even the affection, of men far better than himself. But he was remarkably destitute of moral sympathies, and seems to have recognized no such thing as moral obligation. He was cold, selfish, false. Throughout Germany his name is almost a synonyme for dissoluteness. Of course, both there and here, kindred spirits have a vocabulary by which they can make a very light matter of his heartless profligacy. They think it impertinent to call his vices by their right names and make them an element in the judgment to be passed upon so great a man. But both there and here, those persons to whose apprehension the moral law is a reality, and moral purity a trait of at least equal dignity with poetic talent, will adhere to their old-fashioned notions, even though the character of Goethe himself be in question. With them blackness must stand as *black*, and be called black. The vices which involve treachery and cold-blooded trifling with the peace and virtue of others, are of the sort which there is least occasion to palliate for charity's sake. With the eye of an artist, and the unruffled equanimity of profound self-love, he could calmly survey the ruin he had wrought in the hearts that confided in him. He derived material for poetry from sufferings which he had himself wantonly caused, and one can hardly

avoid the impression, that he inwardly felicitated himself upon the rich accession to his artistic domain furnished by such precious experiences. If this is harsh judgment upon Goethe, the voice of his country is answerable for it, and not I.

And yet this bad man — why should I hesitate at the expression — this bad man, we are assured by the initiated, was the first poet of his time. “All that we mean,” it has been said, “by the higher literature of Germany, which is the higher literature of the world, gathers round this man as its creator.” He knew how to touch the springs of thought and feeling, more in number, more skilfully and more potently than any man in the two generations which his lifetime covered. He could deal like a master with the highest spiritualities, and hold a mirror to the holiest moral capabilities hidden in the recesses of the soul. So say his admirers, and they are too many and strong to be flatly contradicted yet.

So then this *false* man has succeeded as a *true* poet! Must I then surrender my position? No, not for a hundred Goethes. He has not succeeded definitely as a true poet of the highest order. It is too soon to affirm that point settled in his favor against so much contradiction. The sharpness and marvellous reach of his intellectual eye, the breadth of his understanding, the compass of his imagination, and his consummate skill in literary execution, none will deny. And he had a power, altogether unapproached by any other man, to supply by imagination, observation and appropriation, those moral elements, or the

semblance of them, which could have had no vital being within himself, except as the reminiscences of blessed susceptibilities that must have graced his spirit in its youth.

His power and skill in this, as in other things, are wonderful. That is, he was a great, an unequalled Artist, — Artist, that is the term everywhere applied to him — a term which, as applied to literary men, I am sorry to find is getting into some repute amongst us as a term of commendation. In Europe it is generally a term of disparagement, as indicating a writer whose inspiration passes not through the heart, and whose lofty sentiments have no home in his own soul, and no expression in his life.

Goethe is an artist — only that, though so great. I think he will not always be put foremost among the true and noble poets. He was not a true man, and therefore cannot stand there. Already, though still in the zenith of his glory, it is widely felt that he is in some sense a splendid impostor. The radical deficiency in him is beginning to be discerned. It is found that, after all, he is not the man who reaches the holy of holies in the soul ; that though he dazzles he does not warm, though he stirs he does not exalt ; that he is no priest of God. Already the German heart is setting itself right in the matter. It takes, not Goethe, but Schiller for its idol. Its love and enthusiasm run to Schiller, the true man, the earnest, whole-souled man, whose great, glowing heart only just pours forth its own inbred emotions and aspirings ; the man, to whom a generous affection, and a



noble conception and aim, is no mere scientific and available fact, but a vital experience, an inmost and absorbing reality, gushing from his soul for very fullness. It is *his* name, his history, his poetry, not Goethe's, that makes the German eye glisten, and the German breast heave with fond enthusiasm and exalting sympathies. It is so ; it must and ought to be so ; it will be so more and more, there and everywhere.

The world will not separate the man from his works, because he cannot separate himself from them. The identity, though disguised for a time, will appear. Though his biography were never written, nor his name divulged, it will appear, and both he and his works go to their own place. The spider cannot spin the silkworm's cocoon, though his separate threads may look as fine and bright in the sunshine for a while. The false cannot stand in place of the true. Whenever and in whomsoever the artist outruns the man, time will outrun them both, and run them down. When Goethe, and such as he, shall have come to be admired and studied only by the few for purposes of a peculiar artistic culture, Schiller, and such as he, will still be making their way from heart to heart, blessing and being blessed, and calling forth glad and lofty responses from all that is noble in human souls throughout the world.

The poetic success of Lord Byron is a problem of less difficult solution than that of Goethe, for *he had* a heart ; and though he blasted it by vice, and let it freeze and shrivel in skepticism and misanthropy, yet

it had had time for some full-toned, generous beats, enough to account for the scattered gleams of heavenly light that irradiate the mass of sensuality, and the few really true and noble passages which relieve the brilliant but monotonous waste of extravagance and passion.

It is not easy to say whether Byron's success arose from what is good or what is bad in his works. Partly from both, I suppose ; and from the vividness of fancy and energy of expression that appear in both. If his popularity has arisen from those qualities and those parts of his works which minister to diseased fancies and depraved tastes, and to the sullen, reckless, man-hating, God-denying moods and periods of the unbalanced mind ; or which, in the best view of it, satisfy the irregular craving for strong excitement and bedazzlement of any and every sort, a craving so common for a brief season in the ardor of youth, — if Byron's popularity rests here, then it must cease to be fame. He will be read abundantly on this ground. But the books which men delight in in their worst moments and their unwisest periods of culture, and put away whenever they awake to the consciousness of a better nature, such books are not pronounced great and noble even by them, the delighted.

Or, on the other hand, if it be what is pure and exalted in Byron's poetry, that has won the wreath for him, then what a comment we have on my doctrine, that true and high inspirations can retain their force and elevation only as embodied in personal character. For how transiently did they flash and

glimmer in Byron ; how quick and mournfully did they fade out. He died at the age of thirty-six — a wasted and broken-down old man before his prime. And even then, so early, he had nearly outlived the holy aspirations that visited him so invitingly in his youth. He had lived a traitor to the rich endowments of his genius, and all but their husk was gone. His muse, never well wonted to the upper sky, had sunk irredeemably into the earthy mire of Juanism, and only with spasmodic and ineffectual efforts essayed to lift its daggled wing from the slough, or cast a glance of its rheumy eye to the empyrean which it had forfeited. Do we call that success for such a son of the morning, as Byron by his gifts was commissioned to be, but would not ? Is that intellectual success — for *him* ?

I must advert to one other point of connection between literature and morality, though perhaps I have already anticipated it. I mean the necessity of the latter simply as the conservative principle among the mixed and conflicting elements that compose a human being—the guiding, steadying principle. Moral culture is needed to furnish that law of life, that energy and wise direction of the will, that self-control, which is as necessary in literary as in all other pursuits, to the man of genius as to the man of common sense.

A disposition is manifested in modern criticism, to treat with special leniency the moral infirmities and errors of men of genius ; to allow everything for the temperament of genius, as being ill-suited to bear re-

straint, and privileged, in consideration of its extraordinary gifts, to have its own wild way in morals. This disposition is worthy of all praise, so far as it proceeds from holy charity, and that compassionate sympathy, which is the only feeling we ever ought to cherish towards those whose frailties we all partake of. Yes, be lenient, spare all denunciation. Nevertheless, it is not to be forgotten that the moral law extends its jurisdiction over such men, as over all. They, too, must keep it, or they perish. So God has ordained. There are no exemptions in that service. Retribution will follow the transgressor, though we spare all reproach; — that will follow him, be he poet or peasant or both. It is the eternal, adamantine law.

Perhaps there is no instance in literary history, in which so much forbearance has been bespoken and exercised as in that of Burns. And never, surely, lived the man with more winning claims to all gentle speech and feeling. No man, with a human heart in him, can ever feel anything but admiration for the genius of Burns, and pity for his failings and the attendant ruin. But the truth of the case should be stated sometimes. It will do him no harm in his grave, and it is instructive. Burns was a victim of intemperance. The truth is — one cannot connect so foul a word with so fair a spirit, without reluctant misgivings — but the simple truth is, that he became a drunkard. He struggled bravely, and for a long time against the fatal tendency; but it mastered him at last. His constitution gave way under his excesses;

and finally, a tavern debauch and the subsequent hours spent in the street, of a cold night, gave the finishing blow, and that sun went down at noon. It is usual to cover up this unpleasant fact under delicate and kindly allusions to his genial disposition and festive propensities; and this is well, and in good taste. Still it is simply and sadly so, that drunkenness ruined him in life, and caused his premature death at the age of thirty-seven. It is not easy, nor is it pleasant, to look through the halo that invests the name of this sweet minstrel, and behold him in his degradation, just such an object as we turn from with disgust in the streets and foul haunts of our own cities. But I suppose he was, sometimes, no more nor less than just that. It is usual to apologize for Burns, by referring to the ardor of a poetic temperament, his unfavored lot, the ill-usage or neglect of an unappreciating world. Be it so; I suppose there is always something—in temperament or circumstances, temptation of some sort—that leads to such a fall and end. We would always apologize, as well as we can, for the errors and weaknesses of a fallen brother. But not for Burns in particular, or for such as he—not for him more than others. There is much charity felt for the errors of men of genius, which is not of the Christian stamp, but rather of a morbid and squeamish sort. Let us have unbounded charity for them, but let it be true and manly; full of compassion and forgiveness, and with no pharisaic self-complacency, and yet not such as to annihilate moral distinctions, or put them out of sight. Men of genius

are not a class by themselves ; they are not exempt from God's laws and the conditions of humanity ; nor entitled to be fools without the ungracious name. This or that man of genius, forsooth, is not appreciated by the world immediately ; men cannot understand and do not meet his real wants ; his employments are not exactly such as befit the gods ; he is not taken up and made altogether comfortable. Alas, when will it be, that men generally, common or uncommon ones, will be made perfectly comfortable, and have all circumstances just right ? But he is not well situated or well treated, and so he is entitled to say, — O, ungrateful world, I will go mad, I will get drunk, I will go hang myself. Go, then, says the world, calmly, though compassionately ; go, if you will and must. The common neighborly charities of life are supposed to wait on every man in the time of trouble, be he poet or otherwise. But it is not the world's business to run up and down, seeking after genius in discontent and distress — to study out the appliances that will make it perfectly comfortable in its misfortunes or its caprice. No ; it is demanded of every man by his fellow-men, by his own soul and his God, that he shall have and show some self-help, self-sufficiency, power to buffet with difficult and disagreeable things, and acquire some of that hardy *manliness*, which, be he poet or pedler, will forever be the best part of him — of more worth than all his wares, whether of tape and needles or of ode and epic. The man of genius is no exception. It is demanded of him too, and rightfully, that he also be a man, and

cheerily fight the fight and show the mettle of a man. Why not of him? Is he more or less than a man? If more, why should he drink sack? If less, how should he be God's prophet and the world's teacher? But, in truth, he is just man, neither more nor less; and he must vindicate and hold fast the dignity of manhood in his own person, or else he must descend from the tripod, and the oracle in him go dumb, and he must sink and suffer and die like all the unfaithful. He is tried first, to see if he will be a thorough man, and if he will not be that, or when he ceases to be that, then the world cannot be, and God will not be, served by his genius any longer. He must come down, and become even as one of us.

The mad exasperations, and the broken-heartedness of ill-used genius, are very affecting — more so, perhaps, than the same things in common men; but they will not pass. They make folly no wiser, nor weakness more dignified, nor sin more stingless, nor judgment more slack or more evitable.

It is a plain matter. There is a law over all men, over the gifted and the giftless alike; and its first command is, Take care of thyself; rule over thine own body and soul. Rule them by reason and conscience. Do this, or thou shalt surely die. Let the world go with thee as it will, do this. Do this first; this at any rate. Do this as the prime condition of everything else thou wouldst do. Do this, or thou shalt do nothing but wrestle with thy ruin, vainly — vainly, though thy gifts be such as the angels covet.

As I have said these ungracious things in connexion with a name so honored and endeared as that of

Burns, let me further say, in justice to him, that *he* never canted in the godless sophistries of fatalism; *he* never pleaded temperament and circumstance against the clear behests of virtue. Others do it for him, but not he. His will succumbed to his passion, but his moral judgments were not perverted. He knew well his own debasement, and its shame and guilt. In gloom and remorse he bent his noble head before the destroyer he had courted, and yielded himself to the inexorable retribution. That ode addressed to Ruin — not Death, peace-giving death, but stern, unsolaced *Ruin* — it came from his heart of hearts.

“ All hail ! inexorable lord !  
 At whose destruction-breathing word  
     The mightiest empires fall !  
 Thy cruel, woe-delighted train,  
 The ministers of grief and pain,  
     A sullen welcome all !

And thou, grim power, by life abhorred,  
 While life a pleasure can afford,  
     Oh ! hear a wretch's prayer !  
 No more I shrink, — appalled, afraid  
 I court, I beg, thy friendly aid  
     To close this scene of care ! ”

Dear bard ! thou creature of all ethereal essences, heart's brother of us all, in so much that is frailest and so much that is holiest within us, we draw thee to our bosoms with a fond love and a tender pity, and all the more for the sins and griefs that crushed thy great heart. Nevertheless, we will read the dreadful lesson, and note the fearful warning, and remember the irreversible law.



I have left myself but little space for another branch of our general subject, which, however, must not be wholly passed by. It is, the relation of moral character to intellectual attainment and influence as exercised in the practical affairs of the world. The wants of our time and country, the constitution of our modern society, our whole position — personal and relative — forbid a life of mere scholarship or literary pursuits to the great majority of those who go out from our colleges. No learned seclusion, no

“ Segregation  
From open haunts and popularity,”

is permitted to the most of us. However it may have been in other times, and other lands, here and now, but few of our educated men are privileged

“ From the loopholes of retreat  
To look upon the world, to hear the sound  
Of the great Babel, and not feel its stir.”

Society has work for us, and we must forth to do it. Full early and hastily we must gird on the manly gown, gather up the loose leaves and scanty fragments of our youthful lore, and go out among men, to act with them and for them. It is a practical age, and our Wisdom, such as it is, “must strive and cry, and utter her voice in the streets, standing in the places of the paths, crying in the chief place of concourse, at the entry of the city, and the coming in at the doors.”

This state of things, though not suited to the tastes and qualities of all, is not, on the whole, to be regret-

ted by educated men as such. It is not in literary production only or chiefly, that educated mind finds fit expression, and fulfils its mission in honor and beneficence. In the great theatre of the world's affairs there is a worthy and a sufficient sphere. Society needs the well-trained, enlarged and cultivated intellect of the scholar in its midst; needs it and welcomes it and gives it a place, or by its own capacity it will take a place, of honor, influence and power. The youthful scholar has no occasion to deplore the fate that is soon to tear him from the *deliciæ literarum*, the *noctes cænæque deorum*, and cast him into the swelling tide of life and action. None of his disciplinary and enriching culture will be lost or useless even there. Directly or indirectly everything shall tell there. Every hour of study, every truth he has reached, and the toilsome process by which he reached it; the heightened grace or vigor of thought or speech he has acquired — all shall tell fully, nobly, if he will give heed to the conditions. And one condition, the prime one, is, that he be a true man, and recognize the obligation of a man, and go forth with heart and will and every gift and acquirement dedicated, lovingly and resolutely, to the true and the right. These are the terms, and apart from these there is no success, no influence to be had, which an ingenuous mind can desire, or which a sound and far-seeing mind would dare to seek.

Indeed, it is not an easy thing, nay, it is not a possible thing, to obtain a substantial success and an abiding influence, except on these terms. A factitious popularity, a transient notoriety, or in the case

of shining talents, the doom of a damning *fame* may fall to bad men. The temporary leadership of a faction, and offices, such as are yearly tossed like a ball from party to party, are quite likely, in the confusion, to accrue to unprincipled aspirants, the gift of fortune or the prize of skill. But an honored name, enduring influence, a sun brightening on through its circuit more and more even to its serene setting, — this boon of a true success goes never to intellectual qualities alone. It gravitates slowly but surely to weight of character, to intellectual ability rooted in principle, coupled with high and disinterested aims, wedded to the trusty virtues of private life and devoted to the public welfare, and seen to be so by the steady and consistent tenor of many years' unswerving fidelity. I say not only that it ought to be so, but that it is so; an indisputable fact, visible in all human history, and visible here and now. I do not preach the doctrine, but I record the fact.

We are often told from abroad, in terms not always agreeable, that our literary training in this country is very defective; that a high degree of intellectual cultivation is not to be expected from our systems of education, and seldom proceeds from them. All this may be true. But our greatest want lies not there. The want of our educated and able men is not so much a higher degree of intellectual cultivation; that is desirable, no doubt, yet not that primarily, not that first or most — but principle and character, to impart wise direction and beneficent power to the culture and ability which they have. We have scholars, we have strong men, eloquent men, men richly furnished,

and trained to a high mastery and use of noble gifts ; but how inadequate a proportion, I had almost said how few of them, have that purity of life and loftiness of purpose, which win confidence to them, and make them the lights in our sky and the towers of strength on our borders, which they are commissioned to be if they would. It is sad that the great intellect should come short of making a great man, and so be shorn of its glory. It is sad that our affection and respect cannot oftener go with our admiration. It is a sad sight to look upon the man of high endowments, a child of the muses, on whom every god of Olympus has smiled and bestowed gifts, whom we would lean upon and look to for wise guidance, and the inspirations that would lift us to generous aims and move us to noble deeds and lead the way, whom we would that we might trust as the pole-star and follow as the sun, and almost swear by — it seems so fit and so possible that it might be so, and so blessed a thing if it might, — it is sad, I say, that it cannot be, as so often it cannot. And why can it not be ? It is not from defects in merely intellectual training or attainment, but from the overweening confidence he has placed in these. He has valued himself upon these only. He has felt himself, through these, great enough to put aside the gentle wisdom he imbibed at a mother's knee. He has forgotten the time, for it is likely there was a time, when "his heart in its simplicity and purity conversed with itself and drew its desires from its own better nature." He comes to deem intellect the master element that makes the man. Learning, eloquence, and power and skill in using them, these things he vainly

thinks must ensure the true prizes of existence. He goes out into life, and the brilliancy of incipient success, and the hosannas with which the first dawn of genius is ever greeted, dazzle him more and mislead him farther. Temptation comes, and against the vices that taint and cripple the man he is not provided, nor does he care to be. His aspirations, lofty at first, learn to bend down and shape themselves to the low issues which the world presents. And then when the vulgar ambitions of the day, for place, popularity and preferment, get possession of him, then the door is wide open for all the rabble rout of earthy passions and petty aims. He sinks into the sensualist, the schemer, or the demagogue. He crawls and shuffles, or towers and blusters, till all his canting of truth and principle, of honor and patriotism, becomes a mockery too shallow to pass. And then, where is the man? Where and what his intellect is we know, but where is the *man*? Just where intellect, trusting wholly in its own gifts and culture, will always put a man; on an eminence indeed, to be seen and heard of all—but a thing for men to shake their heads at, distrustfully and lamentingly. Such men are to be found in all histories and all times—in our own history and our own time. And they show that the defect of our systems of education consists not so much in the low standard of intellectual culture, as in the overlooking of that other culture, which is essential to its completeness and to the fulfilment even of its own issues, the attainment of its own worthy success.

There are few more melancholy contrasts in life,

than that presented by the ingenuous young scholar, just passing into adolescence, the charm of boyhood yet lingering about him, generous thoughts and high aspirations expanding his fair brow, the fire of genius flashing in his soft eye, and the silvery tones of that young, honest eloquence, which sometimes, I know not how, thrills and inspires me more than all other human speech of the strongest or wisest — promise, promise, written on his glowing countenance, in letters of light, read of all beholders with a fond interest, and read by the parental eye and heart with a silent extasy of loving and exuberant hope, as delicious an emotion almost, I should think, as ever visits the breast of mortals; the contrast, I say, between that youth and the same being as he is when a few years have flown, when he has come, I say not to ruin and infamy, (though that would be no extravagant imagination,) but down from his mount of transfiguration to the world's low level, when avarice has laid its gripe on him, and the common lusts of political and social life have mastered him, and the cares and passions incident to vulgar ambition have ploughed their unvenerable furrows in his face, and all that young glory is departed. “How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed.”

Oh! it is not a small thing to make the results of age correspond in beauty and dignity to the promise of youth. It is no ordinary career that makes the almond-blossoms of age as beautiful and as desirable as the blooming roses of youth, and the drear autumn of life as lustrous and fair as the sweet spring time, and the satisfactions of the finished race as dear as

the fresh budding hopes that brightened its beginning. *That* is success, and it is no light thing to win it. Intellect alone, genius, learning, eloquence, skill, industry, ambition — these alone never won it since the world has stood, and never will. But it can be won. Let principle, character, and soul accompany, pervade, and underlie these great intellectual instrumentalities, and it is won gloriously.

The most dreary and awful chapter in the world's history would be, I suspect, that which should give a true and full account of the declining years, the exit off the stage, of highly-gifted and highly-cultivated minds, but unprincipled, or low-principled, and a career conforming. It would be an account of despondency, misanthropy, and bitter disappointment; a strong man, feeling himself enslaved by contemptible selfishnesses, and scourged and hag-ridden by the meanest passions. It would bring to light that hungry, aching sense, which such minds must feel intensely then, of the worthlessness of what they had done, and the hollowness of what they had got. It would tell of the unsolaced miseries of great powers perverted, and a privileged life wasted, if no worse. It would record the real failure of existence, and the woes that haunt the harrowing consciousness of it; and yet that very failure is the *success* which many a young scholar is pressing forward to attain, as the worthiest object and the brightest boon. Genius and intellectual culture are a fiery curse, unless the mind be disenchanted of that delusion.

It is a frequent inquiry, what is the scholar's true mission in this age and country? What best things

shall he do, here and now ? It is a great and fruitful question. But I deem it quite secondary, comparatively unimportant. A previous problem, and a harder one, is, to train scholars of such a stamp and stature, of such conceptions and aims, that they shall desire those best things—shall have a heart to do them. Such men lack not light to show them the way.

“ Virtue can see to do what virtue would,  
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon  
Were in the flat sea sunk.”

The first thing for the scholar to do — the one thing from which all else will follow — is to give the world assurance of a man. Let each scholar bring a *man* into the field of the world ; a man, with a robust and healthy soul in him, and he will find his work, nor need any to tell him. Let him bring into the common stock of beneficent agencies, in his own person, a lofty, generous manhood, devoted to truth, justice, and humanity, and he will have done his part. The world wants *him*, not merely his intellectual gifts and preparations, which are but his armor, his plume, and his trumpet — *he* wants these, to make him a man of might and a man of mark ; but the world wants *him*, a true and living soul ; not his accoutrements but him. A true and high-toned, high-principled *man* is the only legitimate and desirable result of scholarship.

In the beginning of this address I said, and have endeavored to keep my word so far, that I would plead only for intellectual interests ; that virtue should yield her supremacy and be treated as only the ser-



vant of the intellect, taking the second seat. But she will not stay there. And in closing, I must recant my promise, and put her back. Whether from professional habit, or, as I would hope, from the resistless rightfulness of the procedure, I must put her back. Virtue will not stay in the second place. She will serve the intellect, but serve only by reigning. She must have the throne in man, or there is no rule in him but anarchy, and no end for him but defeat. She must have the making of the man, or he is but hollow armor and a whited sepulchre.

Yes, in reason and in fact, character goes before scholarship, invests it, includes it. Genius and learning must walk in the train of virtue and lackey her to her triumphs; so only can they share them with her. The gifts of intellect, the privileges and acquisitions of scholarship, are worse than lost, unblessed of God and unaccepted of mankind, except as they conspire obediently with their divine leader, virtue, to furnish forth a *Man*.

And be it now our parting prayer for our beloved Alma Mater, that she may henceforth give us *men* — as she has so often proved that she can; not minds, but men *with* minds; — men of the large heart and the upward eye, and souls in which the image of divinity is mirrored. May she bear *men*.

“Felix prole VIRUM

Læta deûm partu, centum complexa nepotes,

Omnes cælicolas, omnes SUPERA alta tenentes.”

















































































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